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Exploration and Discovery.

SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND EXEGESIS.

By FRANK K. SANDERS, PH.D.
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The recent meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis at New York City, December 29 and 30, was varied and interesting. Between thirty and forty members were present at the sessions and a few visitors. The opening address was delivered by the President, Rev. Dr. Talbot W. Chambers, on Prophets and Prophecy. Dr. Chambers held that the conception of the training and career of the prophets set forth by W. Robertson Smith, Driver and George Adam Smith is utterly erroneous, reducing to an injurious minimum their God-granted inspiration.

One of the most interesting discussions of the meeting was upon the "Gospel of Peter." Professor Isaac H. Hall and Professor J. Henry Thayer contributed papers on this recently discovered fragment. Professor Thayer announced six conclusions: (1) That the "Gospel of Peter" was not the basis of the Gospel of Mark, but the apocryphal gospel was founded on the canonical one. (2) The "Gospel of Peter" was used by only a portion of the early church. (3) It was clearly Docetic. (4) Justin Martyr's expression "memoirs" really meant "gospel." (5) In Justin Martyr's day the four canonical gospels were commonly known. (6) The Gospel of Peter especially attests John's gospel.

Rabbi Gottheil of New York city read a note on some ancient Jewish liturgical prayers, supposed to contain in a germinal way many doctrines of the growing Christian church. This liturgy was ascribed traditionally to the Men of the Great Synagogue. Many expressions found in it coincide oddly with expressions found in the New Testament and put the latter in a new light.

Professor John P. Peters gave orally the leading details of a paper on *Ziggurat*, High Place and Temple. He considered the first two to be correlative terms, and aimed to show how the study of the structure of the *Ziggurat* throws light on the structure of the temple. There was little opportunity for the discussion of this theme.

The chief features of Friday morning's session were the papers of Professors Paton and Moore, and a note by Dr. Muss-Arnolt "On certain New Testament passages of peculiar difficulty." Most of these passages were in the Epistle of James.

Professor Moore defended the early date of the Song of Deborah and its historical character in opposition to the mythical or other theories.

Professor Paton's paper on "The use of the word *Kōhēn* in the Old Testament" aimed to show that the apparent contradictions in the statements of the Old Testament regarding the priesthood do not lead necessarily to the conclusion of the school of Graf that there was a radical development in the priestly *cultus*; but that all these statements are consistent and clear on the hypothesis of a development in the use of the word *Kōhēn* itself, which (he claimed) denoted first either a sacred or secular office and was gradually narrowed and specialized in meaning. The paper was ably written and led to one of the most active discussions of the session. Rev. B. W. Bacon argued that such a development in the word was inconceivable without a parallel development in the *cultus*.

The next meeting of the Society will be in May at New Haven.

THE EXPEDITION OF THE BABYLONIAN EXPLORATION FUND.

EXCAVATIONS AT NIFFER DURING THE SEASON OF 1889.

By ASSOCIATE PROF. ROBERT FRANCIS HARPER, PH.D.
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II.

Notwithstanding all delays, difficulties, misunderstandings, etc., I would regard the results of the first year as quite successful. A great amount of good pioneer-work was accomplished. I can not go into the details of the collections purchased in London and Baghdad. These collections—the J. S., Kh. and H.,—have been described at some length in different numbers of *HEBRAICA*. In these were found the Abēsu tablets belonging to the Hammurabi dynasty. Professor Sayce, in a long introduction on the Hammurabi dynasty (*Records of the Past*, New Series, Vol. III.), among other things, says: "Contemporaneous documents lately discovered at Niffer prove that the true name of Ebisum, who is made the eighth king of the first dynasty, was really Abesukh." These tablets were not found at Niffer. Compare *HEBRAICA*, October, 1889, where, in commenting on the Kh. collection, which was purchased in London, I said: "One of the most interesting things connected with these collections was the discovery of a king hitherto unknown. The reading of the name puzzled me for a long time. It was read in two or three different ways by two or three different Assyriologists, to whom I had shown these names. At last, on J. S., 41—a collection of antiquities also purchased in London from Joseph Shemtob—with the aid of Mr. Pinches, I read A-bi-e-shu-'. On J. S., Nos. 42 and 43, the name is written quite plainly in the same